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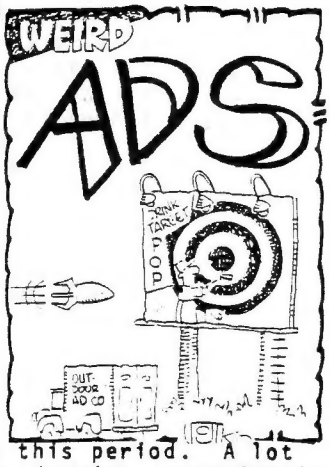
California, home of the weird cults. People come out here to the West Coast to practice the weirdness they learned at home in places like Henrietta, Oklahoma, and Lincoln, Nebraska. I grew up in Lincoln, and it isn't that you can't practice weirdness in between the coasts, just that the local media would ignore you. In San Francisco, where the DemoCon is on this week, there is so much media that local neighborhood lemonade stands and little League baseball make the evening news. You'll see a reporter standing around at the city dump and he's "working up something on waste disposal." The major networks have been watching Moscone Center all week and one newsperson had a big empty parking lot onscreen. Told us in her most pontifical tones that nothing was happening there, no demonstrations, no spontaneous parade of punks or gays or KKK, the Nazis didn't show up. I love stuff like that. Non-news. In California, even poor folks have their own personal press reps. You can't get off a bus without stumbling over a lawyer in search of a good personal injury case; the lawyers even advertise on t-v: "Hi, been run over lately? Some two-bit shyster try to get you to sign a release while you were flat on your back in the emergency room? Don't get taken by some random stranger, get to know us--we'll take you, I mean, take your case.." I watched the beauty contest. Sound off, of course, can't stand t-v muzak. The clone parade. But you know a beauty contest is nothing but a modern slave block; all those poor deluded women are hungry for the bucks and figure those contests are the way to rich husbands. I always have the feeling if I jarred the t-v while they were all out there, that there would be just this big pile of vaselined smiles on stage. Everytime you see one of the candidates, you see this big pool of cameras and t-v gear. They are followed everywhere, every casual word is on someone's tape. Can you see it? Here's Geraldine Ferraro on the pot, she flushes, and the shower curtain zips back and an entire CBS mobile unit covers her as she pulls up her Calvin Kleins. I love the media though. The monotony of the DemoCon is broken up by a woman telling about a freaked-out ex-Viet Nam vet offing a couple dozen people at McDonald's in San Diego, "..and now this," she says, and on comes a Burger King commercial. I like the way people talk about the freakiness of San Francisco, the city where "the women wear the pants and the men wear the panties." If you want to demonstrate, you have to do some costumes, some theater. If you just go there and peacefully stand there, no one is going to pay any attention to you. A guy with a beard puts on a tutu and paints a flag on his face and skates down Market Street and he makes all the channels and you folks out in Utah and Oklahoma say, "They sure are weird out there." Hell, most Californians are just as polyester as you are. It's just that no one ever puts them on film. Sometimes you see their mugg shots in one of those Question Man columns. I've been in that one twice in the past 20 years. Can't remember what he asked me. Maybe what was the worst date I ever had. That would have been easy. Faith was her name. I was about 15 or so and I guess she was the same. Kissing her was like kissing a box of Post Toasties. Talk about tight-lipped. Ah, well, I remember some of the others, too, those girls who open their mouths like they're yawning and you just fall in there, all goo and sloppy, makes you think you were right when you were eight and thought all that kissy-face mush stuff was for the birds. I dunno. You think Mondale would rule from the pot like Lyndon Johnson did? He used to make important visitors come right in the White House john and talk to him while he was taking a dump. He had style, old Johnson. What would we have done without ol' Lyndon to kick around in the sixties? Most of the stuff that happened under his regime started with Jack Kennedy, but no one could have hated him the way we did LBJ. All this old convention footage on the tube tonight. Just as boring in black and white. There's Harry Truman waving at the plebes. Harry ran a hat store in Missouri. The only man ever to order atomic bombs dropped on people. The Father of the House Un-American Activities Committee. There's Walter Cronkite. What is it with guys named Walter? Walt Disney, Walt Mondale. Walt Reed. I hear teenagers using words like "ska" and "punk" and "new wave." "So an' so's gone completely heavy metal, man, I dunno.." Today, there are apolitical doper punks and political nondoper punks and various combos which include the rich fashionmonger punks who hang out on the Telly and fake poor. Some of them even spare change for a giggle. At the end of the day, you see them sneak down and climb into the family Mercedes and glide off to the hills for dinner. When I lived in the Haight back in 1968, I'd see the rich kids park their jags near my place up on Ashbury, then walk the several blocks down the hill to spend the weekend playing Hippy. If you lived in the neighborhood then, you remember the "Summer of love" as a time when thousands of idealistic kids ran away from home and came to the Haight, the new home of free acid, good vibes, and rock and roll, but what most found when they got here was entirely different. Many a lone girl would wake up with a stranger in her sleeping bag. "Hey, you're really a groovy chick; wanna ball?" And, well, no, she didn't, being in a strange crash pad and all, but it wasn't "hip" to refuse sex at the time, so a lot of young women found themselves used by hustlers. They got turned on to various chemicals designed more to lower their resistance to unwanted sex than to expand their consciousness. Sickness and disease was the frequent bonus to all of this indiscriminate sex, not to mention an epidemic of serious drug addiction (documented by David Smith of the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic in his Journal of Psychedelic Drugs). There were people who maintained crash pads. Had a spare bedroom with nothing but mattresses all over the floor and people could stay there; well, most of the kids who hitched into the Haight were very wet behind the ears and they were not at all ready for the streetwise characters who latched on to them the moment they hit the street or the Greyhound Depot.

What these bozos knew about survival you could put in the corner of your eye. If it hadn't been for the people who fed them (The Diggers), doctored them (the Free Clinic), and counseled them (Huckleberry House), many more would have been dead ducks than were. Some of the more serious problems were heroin addiction (over 5,000 cases documented by Smith in one study of the period), infectious hepatitis (the legacy of those who used borrowed dirty needles to shoot speed--methadrine, methamphetamines), and lost children (many folks now punking out had daddies and mommies who were flower children making the Haight Scene, folks who called themselves Sunshine and Windflower and Coconut Breath; birth certificates from the period are a lot of fun.). You see, most of the Haight was old-style San Francisco, multi-ethnic, but one end of it was in the ghetto and organized crime was always around; the big smack and coke dealers drifted down from the jazz clubs to farm the new customers who might just like to try a little better high than lsd. Yeah. Well, the New Age hippies who were giving away free acid soon clashed with the old-style dealer who saw these guys poaching on the turf. "What's this free jive, baby? You fuckin' up my livin'." And the government went along with the old dealers and outlawed lsd in October of 1966, putting it back into the category of a profit-making drug. After that event, the mellow hippies found themselves in hot water. The gangsters had started shooting them (17 killed along Haight Street later that year; one Black hippie shotgunned and tossed over an embankment in Marin-Remember Superspade?) and being pacifists, they decided to vamoose. By the end of the sixties, the Haight was back in the hands of the gangsters, but the teenagers continued to flow in, looking for the mecca they had seen advertised on their tubes. By then it was plastictown with love burgers on sale, buttons and posters mass-produced, instant hip for the well-healed. The new age folks were all up North--Mendocino, Humboldt, parts unknown. Fun, huh? Stay tuned. C.G.



The Sex Business got a big boost during this period. A lot of those runaway girls turned to topless dancing, prostitution, peep shows, photo gallery hustles, modelling, and acting in porn films. Some were junkies and needed quick money for the monkey, but others found the sex life easier than a 9-5, particularly if you were partial to a nice Nob Hill pad with a Z in the garage; point is that Haight-Ashbury was advertised as the land of free sex and dope and those who came got in on the taking or got taken. Lemme tell you, the majority got taken. Everybody wanted a piece of the Haight--movies, t-v, fastfood chains; the whole American Godzilla stormed over San Francisco and the party was on and the main course was runaway teenager. Now a lot of people talked about the pill being the great liberator for women, but that wasn't the kind of liberation they were looking for, and perhaps it took the Haight experience (which, of course, went on in New York in the East Village and in most major urban areas) to enlighten them, that and the male chauvinism of New Left politicos. Anyway, a lot of these young women who were encouraged to run around in skimpy minidresses with no underwear on found themselves raped (compromised, seduced?) many times and only later came up with the term "date rape" or "acquaintanceship rape". I knew guys who would soak joints in hash oil and later on use them on unsuspecting girls they picked up at Fillmore. A few drags on one of those bombers and you were in dreamland. Many of these women woke up the next morning in someone's crash pad, never knowing who or what or how many--tell me that's not fraud and deceit and rape? "Hang loose, baby." "Do your own thing." Get rid of those parental repressions. Tim Leary used to tell people, "You can be anything this time around," and his listeners often were.*** FIRST KINGDOM #20 is out. 4 to go. Congrats to Jack Katz. Incredible achievement in comic art. Jack did the logo above in '75 when his first issue came out. It was announced to the world in COMIX WORLD 16.* New minis: DADA GUMBO is 50/st from Dale Luciano, 6932 Ea Rosewood, Tuscon, AZ 85710.* MIND SHIFT, WEIRD ADS, and BAGPACKER BLUES, are 50/st each from me.* BAD KAT KOMIX is 50/st from Luciano.* OBSCURE 1 goes for $2.50 from Obscure Productions, 3326 E Anaheim St. Suite 124, Long BEach, CA 90804.* MX-TV is 50 from Obscure.* EL VIBORA 55. $5 from J. M. Berengueur, Plaza Beatas 3, Barcelona, SPAIN.* O'Neill, Crumb, Crabman, Richards and Hallgren jamming on the DemoCon in the S. F. CHRONICLE.* TIMECON '84, August 3-5, San Jose Con Center. Write 1025 Jefferson St. Santa Clara 95050.